

Press release

For immediate release

RÉELLES FICTIONS / REAL FICTIONS

Aurélie Blanchette Dubois · Matthew Cangiano · Alex Coma ·

Philippe Léonard · Francis Macchiagodena

12 September – 7 December 2024

Opening during the *Rentrée du Belgo*:

Thursday September 12 2024, beginning at 5pm, with all five artists present

The exhibition is organized by the curatorial team:

Manolis Daris-Bécotte, Adrien Guillet, Clara Lacasse, and Florent To Lay

The exhibition will be accompanied by texts written by:

Aleksandra Kaminska and Alanna Thain

MONTREAL, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 — The team at Centre des arts actuels SKOL is pleased to present **RÉELLES FICTIONS / REAL FICTIONS**, a collective exhibition that brings together the work of five Canadian artists in the gallery's nocturnal ambience.

Featuring a brand-new scenography that plunges the gallery into darkness, this first exhibition of the 2024-2025 season invites visitors into a world where reality and fiction intersect: an exploration of night, of parallel worlds, of dreamscapes and of sensations heightened by obscurity.

In contrast with the transparency of day, the depths of night offer a refuge for those of us seeking privacy, escapism or simply a space to dream, far from our day-to-day realities. In this space-time's generous opacity, our five senses are freed from the excess of daytime stimuli and acquire a new, heightened sensitivity. Each sensation, subtle though it may be, can thus take on a greater intensity, giving each experience a dreamlike character.

Rooted in a hybrid world, between reality and fiction, the works displayed in the exhibition all attest to the peculiar power of night. In this space-time-refuge, the expectations of our contemporary world (to consume, to produce) are momentarily suspended. Despite the growing pressure to remain open, awake, productive and stimulated 24/7, night and its parallel worlds still offer some resistance to the imperatives of our time. It is this same fertile resistance, located in a dream world between reality and fiction, that the artists featured in this exhibition enact through their works.

ABOUT THE WORKS

Multidisciplinary artist **Aurélie Blanchette Dubois** experiments with pictorial forms in all their diversity. The sculpture-installation *The Moistest Shade of Thou I & II* (2023) emerges from the twilight of the space like a screen left on its screensaver. This diptych unveils the artists' digital collage and textile works to create uncanny worlds that question our representations of reality. Each of the two panels replicates a familiar, domestic object (a curtain), whose closer inspection reveals other tangible elements (suspensions, pipes, water jets, human hands). Once repeated and combined into ornamental patterns, these same details overflow from their reality to assert their autonomous existence, their surreal language, and their exuberant vitality. Blanchette Dubois thus shows, through the night, the brilliant emancipation of our utilitarian objects.

At first glance, **Matthew Cangiano's** enigmatic automatic drawings and observatory paintings seem to resist comprehension. The motifs found in his work develop without pre-established ideas, following their own logic. His drawings and paintings, like living beings, require the care of an artist-cultivator, who knows how to give each surface every chance to give the best of itself, without knowing in advance a final result (what we might call the fruit of the harvest). The liminal space of the gallery allows the graphite drawing *Totality and Infinity* (2024) and the oil painting *Doppelganger* (2024) to bloom in the gallery space like nocturnal flowers, distilling their mysterious otherness.

Alex Coma's artistic practice reveals a sophisticated visual language and symbolism through which he seeks to create immersive experiences probing the contours of the human psyche. His paintings, like those included in the exhibition, invite the viewer to peel back the surface and discover the deeper layers of meaning hidden within. Symbols proliferate abundantly in the twilight and nocturnal landscapes of *The Hermit* (2018), *Higher Self II* (2018), and *Runaway Dream* (2022), waiting to be deciphered. This process of discovery and deciphering is at the heart of the viewer's experience, as it reflects the introspective journey that Alex Coma himself undertakes in his artistic explorations.

The T in the video *[T]* (2015) by media artist **Philippe Léonard** resonates as a call to meditate on physical time, a duration that the artist has deliberately stretched and slowed down in his piece. This T also evokes the accelerated time characteristic of iconic public gathering places that have become symbols of contemporary society, such as Times Square. *[T]* is the result of ten consecutive evenings spent in the famous New York square during the hours of artificial illumination. In this eternal daytime that is the lot of many tourist spots, the light from advertising panels and mobile phones seems to briefly vanish between two passersby who obstruct the artist's discreet camera. Thus, faces appear and disappear in waves of shadow and light.

Francis Macchiagodena uses photography, particularly analog photography, to explore abstraction and its relationship with materiality and space, thus interpreting movement and temporality. The photographs he creates question the tensions between forms, distances, and tactile sensations in all their material and metaphysical aspects. The works from the series *Æther* (2020) and *n* (2024) presented in the gallery space are based on light itself as a physical and malleable material. Photography, which etymologically means the study of light, is both the medium and the subject. Here in the dimness of the gallery, Francis Macchiagodena almost literally shows the darkroom development process to evoke the dual power of photography: it transforms and reveals itself, through the inseparable action of light and darkness. This metamorphosis, recorded and experienced by the photosensitive surface, according to the artist's discoveries during photographic development, questions the void, or nothingness itself.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Aurélie Blanchette Dubois is a multidisciplinary artist born in Montreal, QC, in 1988, who lives and works between Geneva and Montreal. Having obtained degrees from the *Haute école d'art et design de Genève* (2019) and Concordia University in Montreal (2013), she experiments with pictorial forms such as painting and digital collage, video, textile and scenography. Her practice is guided by a desire to study the dynamics of authority and alienation that establish themselves between humans, objects and images, which allows for a blurring of the boundary between the political and domestic realms. Her work was presented in exhibitions in Canada, Switzerland and elsewhere. She is a recipient of the HES Excellence Award 2019 and of the FCAC's 2019 Bourses Déliées, she has exhibited work at Mala in Lisbon (2021), at the Centre d'art contemporain de Genève (2021) and at Kunstverein de Nuremberg (2024). She will also soon be showing work at Arprim in Montreal (2024).

Matthew Cangiano's practice is plagued with dualism. This is not accidental and reflects a deeper thread, if not the primordial source, of his impulse towards art itself: "the mystery of Otherness". For him, one of art's highest aspirations is a seemingly impossible leap: the attempt to breach the confines of the individual's subjectivity towards a true encounter. The work is both the fruit of this leap and the leap itself, for every fruit contains a seed. For him, an encounter is not limited to an interaction with what we normally think of as living beings. An abandoned lot, a sequence of images, or an idea can turn one inside out. In broad strokes, his impulse towards drawing seeks an outside by going in and painting an inside by going out.

Alex Coma is an interdisciplinary artist born in Granby, QC, in 1991. He lives and works between Spain and Canada. He graduated with a BFA in Photography from Concordia University in Montreal (2014) and from the Montreal Fine Arts Academy (2017). His work is imbued with strong symbolic and esoteric elements. His work reflects his desire to explore the intersections between inner consciousness and broader spiritual and philosophical

constructs. Drawing inspiration from humanist and symbolist figures such as Joseph Beuys and Carl Jung, Alex Coma has cultivated a practice that is both deeply introspective and outward-looking. At the heart of Coma's practice is the quest for an essential, perhaps inaccessible truth, which lies in the delicate balance between knowledge and mystery. His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions and art fairs, including at Visionary Art Collective (New York 2021), Centre Culturel Marie-Uguay (2021), Archive Contemporary (2020), Stewart Hall Gallery (2020), Power Plant (Toronto 2019), Ubisoft Gallery (2019), and Affordable Art Fair Battersea (London 2019).

Philippe Léonard was born in Montréal, QC in 1982, he lives and works in Montréal. Since graduating with an MFA in Film Production from the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema (2015), Philippe has been working as a freelance filmmaker, educator, technical consultant, media artist and projection designer for live music (Godspeed You!, Black Emperor, Elisapie, and Cigarettes after Sex). His practice is situated at the crossroads of expanded cinema (live A/V performances and installations) and forms of experimental documentary. His work has been shown in festivals, artist-run centers, museums and galleries in Canada, Europe, Asia and the US.

Francis Macchiagodena is a visual artist born in Laval, QC, in 1993. He lives and works in Montreal. He holds an MFA in Studio Arts with a specialization in Photography from Concordia University (2020). He has exhibited his work in numerous galleries, fairs, and cultural centers since 2016. In 2018, he presented a solo exhibition at La Castiglione titled *Eclipses in the Realm*, his first body of work dealing with space in all its multiplicity. The production of his latest series, *Mers d'argent*, culminated in the opening of a solo exhibition at Maison des arts et de la culture de Brompton in September 2023 and will be exhibited again at Maison des arts de Laval in 2025. Through the photographic materiality of his abstract works, Francis Macchiagodena explores the limits of our sensory perceptions to open us to the metaphysical questions that govern our existence.

ABOUT THE CURATORIAL TEAM

Manolis Daris-Bécotte is an artist and cultural worker living in Montreal. He is the co-founder, alongside artist Thomas L. Archambault, of the experimental cinema collective Primordial Dismemberment, whose works have been presented in group exhibitions at InterAccess (Toronto) and Centre SKOL (Montreal), as well as in numerous film and media art festivals, including Currents New Media (Santa Fe) and Fantasia International Film Festival (Montreal).

Adrien Guillet is a French visual artist and cultural worker living and working in Canada. A graduate of the Geneva University of Art and Design, he structures his work around a reflection on the formation and use of visual signs in the commercial field.

Clara Lacasse is an independent photographer and visual artist living in Montreal. She is the recipient of the New Generation Photography Award (2022) presented by the National Gallery of Canada and Scotiabank. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at VU Photo (Quebec) and DRAC (Drummondville), as well as in group exhibitions at the National Gallery (Ottawa), Arsenal (Toronto), and Centre SKOL (Montreal).

Florent To Lay has been working in the cultural sector for nearly ten years, first as a project manager and now as an independent curator for the past five years. He was recently appointed as the director of Centre SKOL.

ABOUT THE CO-AUTHORS OF THE EXHIBITION TEXT

Aleksandra Kaminska is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communications at Université de Montréal. She primarily works at the intersection of media studies, material and visual cultures, and the history and philosophy of technology. From 2021 to 2023, she co-directed a collaborative research-creation project titled “The Sociability of Sleep” with Alanna Thain, aimed at generating new interdisciplinary knowledge and empathies to rethink sleep as a site of social imagination and its conditions in contemporary culture. She was recently appointed as the director of the scientific journal *Intermédialités: histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques*.

Alanna Thain is an Associate Professor specializing in world cinemas and cultural studies in the Department of English at McGill University. She directs the Moving Image Research Lab (MIRL), which is dedicated to the study of the body in moving images and performance in a broad sense. She is the former director of the Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. From 2021 to 2023, she co-directed the collaborative research-creation project “The Sociability of Sleep” with Aleksandra Kaminska, aimed at generating new interdisciplinary knowledge and empathies to rethink sleep as a site of social imagination and its conditions in contemporary culture. She also leads the Collective for Research on Epistemologies and Ontologies of Embodied Risk (CORÉRISC), a research team interested in how the idea of embodied risk allows access to other ways of knowing and being in the world, in dialogue with intersectional queer and feminist theories.

OUR PARTNERS

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SPECIAL THANKS

We thank all the teams, members, artists, committees, friends, and volunteers associated with Centre SKOL, as well as our Board of Directors for 2024-2025, composed of **Fanny Latreille-Beaumont** (President), **Félipe Goulet-Letarte** (Vice President), **Laurianne Lalonde** (Treasurer), **Laurence Beaudoin Morin** (General Secretary), **Niki Jessup** (Administrator), and **Johanne Gauthier** (Administrator).

We would like to extend special thanks to **Stéphanie Chabot**, who has recently left her position as General and Artistic Director of Centre SKOL to pursue new challenges. Over twelve years, Stéphanie has marked, embodied, and strengthened the mission of the Centre. The promotion of socially engaged art has been at the heart of her achievements: publications, platforms for exchange and reflection, artistic mediation, emphasis on performance, and emerging artists all prove this. Her decisive action on the Master Plan, boldly guiding SKOL towards new horizons while remaining true to its foundations, is the final piece of her significant contribution to the Centre.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 12, 2024, from 5 PM to 10 PM, with the presence of the five artists

Exhibition Dates: September 12 - December 7, 2024

Location: 372 Sainte-Catherine Street, 3rd floor, #314, Montreal, QC H3B 1A2

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Opening Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, from noon to 5 PM

Parallel Activities and Conferences: Dates and activities to be announced for the duration of the exhibition, special programming during Galleries Weekend Montreal 2024 (September 26-29), to be announced soon

Admission: Free

Accessibility: Wheelchair accessible

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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